



LEADER IN COUNTY MEATH

An Overview of Programme Themes and Local Objectives



LEADER Rural Development Programme
2014-2020
County Meath

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Section 1:

A Look at the Main Themes of the LEADER Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

Overview of LEADER (RDP) 2014-2020 Themes

Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Rural Tourism

Enterprise
Development

Rural Towns

Broadband

Social Inclusion

Basic Services
Targeted at Hard
to Reach
Communities

Rural Youth

Rural Environment

Protection and
Sustainable use of
Water Resources

Protection and
Improvement of
Local Biodiversity

Development of
Renewable Energy

Overview of LEADER Themes 2014-2020

Theme 1 – Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Theme One focuses on driving continued local economic development, including diversification of the rural economy and the creation of employment opportunities for the local community, including those from disadvantaged groups.

Sub-theme: Rural Tourism

Rural tourism provides a stimulus for enterprise and job creation. Tourism tends to exploit particular assets that are generally place-specific, for example, landscape and history. Accordingly, it offers significant potential, even in peripheral areas. Interventions under this sub-theme should focus on actions that have the potential to make the area more attractive for local, national and foreign visitors.

Examples of actions that may be supported include:

- feasibility studies to explore the tourism potential of an area;
- marketing initiatives;
- the creation of tourism hubs to facilitate a multi-sectoral approach,
- activities that centre on the development and renovation of infrastructure, which contribute to historic and heritage based tourism. In exceptional circumstances, and in consultation with the Department, this may include private dwellings where this can be shown to contribute to historic and heritage based tourism;
- actions that promote the development of cultural/heritage infrastructure of local significance and arts-based activities and events; and
- the provision of amenity and leisure facilities, which can support adventure/eco-based tourism.

LEADER supported tourism projects must comply with relevant Fáilte Ireland or other sectoral standards.

Sub-theme: Enterprise Development

LEADER can support micro, small and medium enterprises as defined in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC3.

The CEDRA Report of 2014 identifies areas that might benefit most from LEADER support:

- Artisan and other food businesses;
- Renewable Energy;
- Marine diversification (to complement support provided by Fisheries LAGs funded under the European Maritime Fisheries Fund);
- Social Enterprises; and
- Creative Industries e.g. traditional crafts, new media & design

Supported actions might include investment support or sector-specific training programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, social enterprises, start-ups and established SMEs.

Overview of LEADER Themes 2014-2020

Sub-theme: Rural Towns

This sub-theme supports the regeneration of rural towns. It seeks to promote them as attractive places to visit, live and do business in. LEADER is particularly suited to revitalising rural towns through co-ordination of integrated approaches that build on the economic strengths and infrastructure of the area whilst addressing the key challenges for business, community and recreation.

Actions to support the regeneration of rural towns might include town renewal schemes that renovate derelict buildings in order to attract business to vacant properties. The building or refurbishment of community buildings also provides a multifunctional infrastructure for social, cultural and sporting activities and training for the local community. Developing and promoting unique social events and activities can provide an important stimulus to rural towns. LEADER projects in this area should complement and add value to other national supports for rural towns.

Actions should be sustainable, and consider and incorporate all the needs of the area, i.e. standalone projects that deliver on one objective and do not seek to address multiple objectives should be avoided. Works that normally come within the remit of Local Authorities, such as large infrastructure projects, are not eligible for LEADER funding. Where it is not clear whether a project could be considered to come under the remit of the Local Authority (e.g. ornamental street lighting or footpaths), the LAG will consult with the Department before approving funding.

Sub-theme: Broadband

Increased access to reliable and high-speed broadband is vital for the economic and social development of rural areas and communities. High-quality broadband enables businesses to set-up or continue to be based in rural areas, by overcoming barriers relating to access to markets and services. There is also a potential to create additional employment as access to broadband can support businesses to grow.

This sub-theme supports local actions that complement national initiatives aimed at developing a comprehensive rural broadband infrastructure. This sub-theme does not cover most broadband infrastructure, as this is covered under the National Broadband Plan. Actions that may be covered include basic ICT training to priority groups, for example, to enable older people and young people to stay connected. Other actions may focus on skills development for installing broadband, feasibility studies in relation to community broadband and funding for small scale equipment (such as boosters) and small scale infrastructure to allow local businesses access broadband. Funding in excess of €10,000 cannot be provided for broadband equipment or infrastructure.

Overview of LEADER Themes 2014-2020

Theme 2 – Social Inclusion

This theme focuses on promoting the cohesion of the sub-regional area, from both an economic development and social inclusion perspective. People may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities that are considered the norm for others in society because of inadequate income and resources. In rural areas, in particular, the low density of population, high levels of out-migration and distance from urban centres, can often result in fewer employment options and lower levels of service provision than in urban areas. In rural areas, people's experience of exclusion is often compounded by physical isolation.

Sub-theme: Provision of Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Areas

This sub-theme focuses on improving access to basic services for people living in rural and remote areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion. In some cases, it might involve the introduction of a new service or the re-introduction of a previously withdrawn service under the following categories:

- Community
- Education/Training
- Social/Cultural
- Recreation

Examples of groups who may be at risk of social exclusion include, but are not limited to:

- those living in disadvantaged areas
- unemployed and underemployed people
- women
- lone parents
- older people
- NEETs (Young People who are Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- Travellers
- those living in remote and less accessible areas
- fishermen or farmers on small holdings
- children
- people with a disability
- people living alone
- migrants/new communities (including refugees/asylum seekers)
- Roma

Sub-theme: Rural Youth

The promotion of youth entrepreneurship and associated training can provide improved pathways for young people to access economic opportunities in rural areas. Actions that develop the social infrastructure of rural areas provide important opportunities for young people to realise their potential. These might include –

- the provision of youth clubs/cafés;
- improved access to ICT;
- sports/recreation activities;
- arts-based projects; and
- youth development programmes.

Young people, particularly those who may be vulnerable, also have distinct needs regarding the type of services they may need to access.

For the purposes of LEADER, young people are defined as people aged 15 to 35 years.

Overview of LEADER Themes 2014-2020

Theme 3 – Rural Environment

This theme seeks to maximise the potential of environmental actions to contribute to the sustainable development of rural communities. It focuses on utilising the landscape within a local area, its features and natural resources, while simultaneously creating a greater environmental awareness and improving environmental protection.

LAGs and project promoters must comply with all national and EU Legislation, as well as any restrictions or obligations imposed by Government Departments or the relevant Local Authority, which may apply to the proposed project. All projects must have the necessary permissions or licences in place before any work commences. Projects funded under the sub-theme must also comply with the relevant Environment and Heritage rules.

Sub-theme: Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

Greater protection of local water resources is important for sustaining rural communities. Environmental schemes have the potential to play a pivotal role in addressing pressures on water reserves and in supporting the local community to conserve this valuable resource. Actions funded under this sub-theme may include:

- raising general awareness on water conservation issues,
- the development of local water conservation plans and feasibility studies;
- capacity building on the technical aspects of water recycling schemes and
- initiatives that conserve water, for example, community programmes for rain water harvesting and the use of greywater for fertiliser and general washing.

Sub-theme: Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

Biodiversity encompasses natural wildlife, flora and fauna and is an important foundation to the healthy functioning of ecosystems. The protection of biodiversity is a growing concern, with the loss of various species of wildlife, flora and fauna as well as their natural habitat. Factors that impact on local biodiversity include human population growth, cutting hedgerows and changes in land usage.

Actions that promote local biodiversity might include:

- awareness raising and practical guidance on how to protect biodiversity domestically;
- feasibility studies and action plans in respect of larger scale projects that enhance and protect particular aspects of biodiversity; and
- local initiatives that support biodiversity and environmental improvements, for example, the upgrading of parks and river walks, establishment of nature corridors, habitat creation and planting of native species.

Sub-theme: Development of Renewable Energy

Clean sources of energy have a lower environmental impact on nature than conventional energy technologies. This sub-theme seeks to mitigate the impact of recent environmental trends, including climate change. Community-based initiatives will play a key role in realising national and EU environmental targets, particularly in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions through energy infrastructure. Renewable energy technologies may also generate new employment opportunities in rural areas.

Actions might include:

Overview of LEADER Themes 2014-2020

- general awareness raising on environmental issues and feasibility studies relating to green technologies;
- capacity building actions focusing on the installation and use of renewable energy technologies; and
- local projects involving technologies that deliver sustainable energy alternatives, for example, biomass heating, solar power, community wind farms and community-based heating systems.

Section 2:

**A Look at the Local Objectives &
Strategic Actions for LEADER in County
Meath**

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Local Objective 1

To drive the integration and enhancement of Meath's unique combination of historical and contemporary tourist offerings cementing its reputation, identity, and attractiveness facilitating the effective realisation of the county's exceptional tourism potential.

Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Sub-theme: Rural Tourism

Strategic Action 1

Rural Ways - to use cutting edge technology to accurately communicate the authenticity and uniqueness of Meath's rural tourism experience with a strong focus on antiquities, activities and attractions made accessible and intriguing to visitors in search of an authentic rural experience.

Description of Strategic Action

Authenticity, real experiences, interaction with people and place, these are the key themes running through the future of rural tourism in County Meath. Rural Ways will communicate the availability of these experiences and will facilitate visitors to engage and interact with them providing a wide range of options and personal choice, generating a sense of anticipation and interaction with the unexpected.

Support will be provided for technological hardware and software development, data recording and upload, associated human resources, digital mapping, high resolution imaging, brand identity linking with the Boyne Valley product and the Ancient East global marketing product. Support will also be provided to market the rural ways brand and the availability of the technology platform.

Strategic Action 2

Tourism – Visitor Attractions, Tourism Facilities and Accommodation: to invest in the enhancement of iconic sites of visitor interest, development of new and significant visitor attractions and support for investment in the direct provision of activity-based offerings by existing tourism providers.

Description of Strategic Action

This strategic action seeks to benefit rural tourism through the creation of new visitor flows by investing in iconic sites whose value has not been fully realised while also investing in locally based visitor activities and attractions. Support will be offered for the following initiatives and developments:

- Improved access, parking facilities and visitor comfort facilities and infrastructure
- Innovative solutions to visitor transport barriers and access facilities for the disabled
- Site interpretation, viewing points, site protection measures and site mapping
- Support for provider led investment in activity and recreation based visitor facilities
- Support for medium to large scale visitor attractions, priority afforded to new developments

Support for visitor accommodation where need can be demonstrated

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Strategic Action 3

Historic Country Homes and Gardens of Meath - Implementation of Meath's Historic Country Homes and Gardens Initiative

Description of Strategic Action

This initiative will support actions and operations aimed at increasing the number of homes and gardens open to the public in County Meath and to enhance and upgrade existing properties operating in this tourism sector in order to attract the growing number of visitors to Meath who expressly wish and expect to interact with this tourism product. Support will be provided for the following developmental requirements and associated costs:

- External demesne development and improvements
- Internal visitor facilities and accommodation
- Restoration of historical, internal and external features
- Accommodation for visitors including function facilities
- Interpretation of historical aspects and historical document viewing
- Walled garden restoration and development
- Provision of outdoor activities and walks
- Technical, archaeological and engineering services
- Access, egress and visitor management facilities

Strategic Action 4

Scenic Vistas - developing the economic potential of Meath's scenic vistas through the provision of visitor facilities, improving access and interpretation, addressing health and safety and the creation of attractive and interesting sites.

Description of Strategic Action

During the scenic vista and site identification process, a survey was conducted to identify the developmental requirements attaching to each potential site. LEADER support will therefore be offered to assist in meeting the capital cost involved in site development and also with high level interpretation, communication tools and marketing strategies and associated costs. Specifically support will be offered for the following:

- Appropriate lay-by development and associated costs
- Pedestrian pathways and view arena development
- Picnicking, human comfort facilities and seating
- Fencing and walling and elevated viewing points
- Underground servicing and lighting
- Interpretation materials and signage
- Landscape works and plantings
- Technical support, architectural and engineering costs

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Local Objective 2

To broaden and enhance the enterprise base in the county, and maximise local sustainable economic opportunities in Meath.

Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Sub-theme: Enterprise Development

Strategic Action 1

Creative Sector Development - to support the future development of the Creative Sector by exploiting opportunities for growth, mitigation of barriers to growth both on the supply and demand side, introduction of supports to enable innovation and business success, the development of sustainable creative clusters, enhanced interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs locally, in Ireland and overseas. Support for participation in events and exhibitions concerned with their industry.

Description of Strategic Action

In furthering the development of the creative sector in Co. Meath support will be offered for the following initiatives and operations:

- The clustering of CCIs and partnership development between CCIs and industry, research, education and other relevant sectors and services.
- The setting up and operation of innovation labs.
- In co-operation with the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) to assist in guaranteeing appropriate recognition for professional content creators and the protection of intellectual copyright to include licencing, trademarks and brands.
- To identify and support new knowledge and creative based enterprise and local development models.
- To address underdeveloped entrepreneurial and management skills
- To broaden knowledge of property protection issues and support solutions
- To enhance local markets and opportunities to market creative goods and services and to exploit creative industries export markets.
- To provide support for mentoring enablers to address capacity for experimentation and support required for entrepreneurial success.
- To encourage interaction between cultural and creative entrepreneurs working in Co Meath and their overseas counterparts.
- To support participation in local, national and overseas events to include seminars and exhibitions concerned with their industry
- To enable effective networking and artist led experimentation and innovation
- To strengthen entrepreneurial skills through training and capacity building
- To support the acquisition of specialised equipment, production facility fit out and shared service and production hubs

Strategic Action 2

Artisan Food and Speciality Products – to support the establishment, growth and sustainability of inclusive rural food and speciality product enterprises.

Description of Strategic Action

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

This strategic action seeks to assist with investments which support: improvements in productivity; new product development and certification; use of new technologies; capital grant aid for the development of infrastructure; purchasing of equipment; further processing and marketing of products; development and sustainability of networks; collective network services and specialised human resource provision; investments to encourage diversified activity; support for analysis and development; industry and sector training; and implementation of quality standards. Support will also be offered for direct and collective marketing, fit out of production facilities, initiatives to drive direct engagement with customers, attendance at showcase events and other measures to enhance visibility and presence in the market.

Strategic Action 3

Innovative Manufacturing, Networking, Service Provision and Prototype Development - to continue to support innovation in the manufacturing and services sectors and to encourage research and development and prototype creation.

Description of Strategic Action

Over the period 2007-2013 prototype development in Meath performed well with initiatives emerging in the forestry timber recovery sector, soft fruit and vegetable transportation and handling, sustainable roofing solutions, transformer multi-use farm equipment, new era wood chip dryers fuelled by waste timber and reduced power self-sustaining information transmission systems and new banking security software applications. There is every indication that these innovations will continue to emerge therefore support will be offered for analysis, research and development, 3D printing, manufacturing and material costs, marketing and showcasing of new products, patent registration, licencing, branding and protection of knowledge know how and hard and software designs and systems. Progression to full scale production and/or operationalisation will also be supported.

Strategic Action 4

Sport Horse Industry – To exploit the potential of Meath’s sports horse industry to generate employment, support the growth of sustainable service enterprise, grow equine tourism, attract overseas visitors, provide for recreational and leisure activity, support breeding standards and contribute to star rating objectives.

Description of Strategic Action

- To support rural enterprise in servicing the equine sector through the provision of improved information, training and access to technologies such as AI, embryo transfer and advanced reproductive technologies coupled with access to AI technicians for equines.
- To assist in the progress of equestrian centres and livery yards towards star rating in respect of quality of husbandry, facilities, horse instruction and other services capable of being addressed by service provision enterprise.
- To promote and foster a range of equine tourism and recreationally focused initiatives to promote increased participation in equine tourism across the sector in Co Meath.
- To support the further development and growth of Meath’s Royal Equine Hospital which was constructed with aid provided by the NRDP LEADER Programme 2001-2007.
- To create opportunities for the exposure of primary and secondary school children to the sport horse industry.
- To invest in the development of equine facilities linked to equine tourism and service related initiatives and enterprises.

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Local Objective 3

To spearhead the rejuvenation and development of the towns and villages of County Meath.

Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Sub-theme: Rural Towns

Strategic Action 1

Festival Development and Support

Description of Strategic Action

To provide capital assistance to support further growth and development of festival activity in Meath. Investment will be guided by feedback on needs provided by festivals and will address sustainability, diversity and growth. Collective initiatives will be supported such as to address sharing of facilities and equipment, marketing based on a shared identity, collective purchasing, enhancement of visitor facilities and services, human resource provision and training and support to equip/re-equip with essential equipment and rental of same. The introduction of new activities and attractions will also be supported.

Strategic Action 2

Village and Town Centre Development - Strategic actions to support the development of rural villages and towns through the enhancement and exploitation of local resources including human capital, the physical environment, historical and heritage based resources and employment generation potential

Description of Strategic Action

Support will be offered to operations which address the following:

- Tourism operations designed to attract and facilitate visitors with an emphasis on authentic experiences
- Town and village regeneration plans which focus on local resources and built on self-help methodologies
- Conservation and enhancement operations based on the preservation of local heritage and the enhancement of historic streets, monuments and other public spaces
- Operations which seek to enhance the village and town environment and amenity and recreational interests of residents, business and visitors
- Operations and initiatives that address the economic development of the area
- Operations and initiatives which support social development, integration, social service requirements and community facilities
- The delivery of festivals and events to build visitor numbers, profile the village or town and capable of generating economic activity
- Support for new enterprise developments and or expansion and development of existing enterprise

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Strategic Action 3

Community Capacity - to enable specific communities of place in county Meath to work in partnership to create more resilient communities, thriving local economies and better places in which to live and work.

Description of Strategic Action

This action will support local development, networking and capacity building to empower local communities to develop the skills and experience that the community can draw on in developing a sustainable future and harnessing the potential of LEADER. An emphasis will be placed on enabling communities' to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills required to lead or contribute to the development of their community with LEADER assistance; improving partnership working between communities, business, public agencies and third sector organisations. Community capacity resides in a community's individuals, formal organisations and associations, and the relational networks among them and linking those to the broader systems of which they are a part. It is our intention that building community capacity under this strategic action will focus on these components and will act as a priming action to facilitate capital investment through other strategic action budgets.

Local Objective 4

To protect, enhance and widen the social and economic benefits of Meath's natural, built, social and cultural heritage.

Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Sub-theme: Rural Tourism

Strategic Action 1

The development of a network of inter-connecting mix and match heritage based visitor trails throughout rural Meath built around the hidden and historic antiquities of the County.

Description of Strategic Action

To support actions designed to preserve and animate the historical value of Meath's hidden and historic antiquities, enhance awareness of and access to such antiquities. Support will be offered to improve access while also supporting measures to support preservation, site protection, health and safety and site interpretation. Support will also be offered for clustered trail development, appropriate signage, safe viewing points and technical services required for appropriate site development.

Strategic Action 2

Natural, Social and Cultural Heritage - To support operations designed to support the rural economy through the exploitation of the economic value of Co Meath's unique natural, social and cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting operations designed to support the preservation, conservation and animation of these valuable resources.

Description of Strategic Action

Investments in rural heritage have to be conceived as part of broader programmes in favour of social and economic development. In that regard, the integration of rural heritage in other developmental sectors as a crosscutting theme opens the way for a new generation of investments. Institutional co-ordination and community involvement within a gradual process of economic improvement and physical rehabilitation must be viewed as the necessary ingredients

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

for taking on the manifold conservation and revitalisation needs. In the long run community involvement is the best means of achieving lasting results.

Local Objective 5

To provide support for improved access to and utilisation of broadband services to increase connectivity across rural communities and with the disadvantaged and hard to reach. To enable ICT driven interaction between rural communities, relevant state agencies and service providers while also enabling access to broadband for local business and new era community enterprise.

Theme: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

Sub-theme: Broadband

Strategic Action 1

Broadband Utilisation and Access - Improving connectivity to enable improved utilisation, service delivery and access.

Description of Strategic Action

This action will provide rural communities with assisted connectivity to information and services through developing new community services to be located in community or state agency facilities situated within rural communities. Increased access and know-how to reliable and high-speed broadband is vital for the economic and social development of rural areas and communities. High-quality broadband enables businesses to set-up or continue to be based in rural areas, by overcoming barriers relating to access to markets and services. There is also a potential to create additional employment as access to broadband can support businesses to grow. Individuals and communities will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to develop and access digital connectivity and make more use of it.

Local Objective 6

To provide support for community facility development to counteract the withdrawal of essential services, to provide for social and economic interaction at the local level, to promote community enterprise, provide for service provider outreach and to operationalise community action in support of the hard to reach and disadvantaged in rural society.

Theme: Social Inclusion

Sub-theme: Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities

Strategic Action 1

Community Facility Development – Developing community facilities to enhance quality of life, educational opportunity and address local service loss.

Description of Strategic Action

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

Community assets are those which include social capital, physical assets leased, owned and managed by the community and may include a wide range of buildings, facilities, land or environmental spaces and features. An emphasis will be placed on operations which promote the benefits of assets for building community life, addressing social inclusion, enhancing opportunities for progression, supporting lifelong learning and training, are attractive to residents, businesses and visitors and capable of providing essential services.

Strategic Action 2

Developing Community Resources targeting the Hard to Reach

Description of Strategic Action

Examples of potential activity include feasibility studies and business plans for resource and asset based development; investment in development and refurbishment of local community resources; purchase of equipment to enable additional economic development and social inclusion objectives to be achieved; review of community resources to maximise usage; developing resource sharing management initiatives; reviewing and developing ways to overcome barriers to resource utilisation e.g. integrating local services with community transport initiatives; developing and supporting resource sharing networks and knowledge sharing in respect of community resources and facilities across community groups and organisations. It is also important to note that where resources are being placed in community ownership or control, the LAG if providing support has an obligation to ensure that the future of these resources and their utilisation is sustainable. Business planning will play a key role in resource transfer, community management policy and control.

Local Objective 7

To support the development of a strategic framework and community planning in addressing the issues facing rural youth. Support will be provided for the assimilation of rural youth into the social economy to provide essential work like experience, promotion of creative endeavour, improvement of employability and action to address skills deficits and ease the increasingly difficult journey into employment.

Theme: Social Inclusion

Sub-theme: Rural Youth

Strategic Action 2

Addressing the needs and advancing the interests of rural youth.

Description of Strategic Action

In developing a strategic framework to address the issues facing rural youth in the county, the LAG is proposing to encourage and support the development of the social economy with a specific youth focus. According to a report of the Social Enterprise Task Force 2010, the social enterprise sector in Ireland has the potential to grow significantly to represent 5 % of GDP and to generate at least 65,000 jobs. It recognises that the sector is underdeveloped and that growth is hindered by a number of historical factors including a lack of policy focus and direction and limited access to support structures similar to those available to the SME sector.

Employers across all sectors continue to identify the lack of customer facing skills as one of the key issues in filling job vacancies while for job seekers it is the insistence that applicants have 2 to 3 years' experience for almost every position advertised that presents a problem. Developing the social economy with a youth focus in County Meath can simultaneously address these issues.

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One of the key elements of the proposed social economy model will be ensuring that the young people who participate achieve an appropriate recognition for the skills they have developed. Meath Partnership as a QQI accredited body will assist participating organisations and project promoters to provide the necessary skills recognition.

Local Objective 8

To support the sustainable development of County Meath's water resources, to improve the recreational use of inland waters, to realise the significant health, economic and environmental benefit arising from such development and to foster a better understanding of the need to care for and protect our environment.

Theme: Rural Environment

Sub-theme: Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

Strategic Action 1

Inland Waters Recreation and Protection - To support the conservation focused development of lakes and rivers as recreational resources which contribute to quality of life while offering opportunities for water based enterprise creation.

Description of Strategic Action

This strategic action will support the sustainable development of Meath's water resources through the provision of aid to Blue Way development proposals, foreshore facilities, improved access, angling facilities, boating, kayaking, canoeing, bird watching and other forms of water based recreational activity.

Local Objective 9

To support actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems through engagement with agencies, organisations, communities and individuals with specific interest in biodiversity in respect of County Meath's farmlands, bogs, lakes, rivers, coastal sites and wildlife habitats.

Theme: Rural Environment

Sub-theme: Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

Strategic Action 1

Protection and Improvement of Local Diversity - To support conservation and restoration of biodiversity through actions to combat the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems by strengthening the knowledge base for the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity as a rural resource.

Description of Strategic Action

Biodiversity in Meath is rich and abundant, and the landscape provides numerous areas and forms of natural habitat. River valleys, particularly those of the Boyne and Blackwater, the county's coastal zone to the east, rolling farmland, lakelands, bogs and upland areas (many defined by historical and pre-historical significance), provide a breadth and depth of landscape types and a multiplicity of habitats that represent both resources, assets, and attractions but also obligations and responsibilities for citizens, developers and for environmental policy more generally. As such, support will be provided to initiatives and projects such as:

Overview of the Local Objectives for County Meath

- small-scale and local biodiversity research initiatives that form part of wider development projects or plans;
- wider research into new forms of biodiversity protection, recovery or enhancement services in local settings that have long-term scope to be commercial or offer “public good” benefits;
- local biodiversity interest groups, community actions, or local improvement projects;
- tourism projects and initiatives that place significance on biodiversity protection, enhancement, celebration or education;
- recreational amenities that seek to enhance, protect or raise awareness about and experience of local biodiversity and its importance;
- projects and initiatives seeking to enhance young people’s understanding and appreciation of biodiversity;
- training programmes for local communities, interest groups or individuals that centre on biodiversity protection, enhancement or promotion;
- programmes to enhance biodiversity knowledge and appreciation among tourism, recreation and sporting service providers (e.g. in hunting/shooting, fishing, cycling, equestrian, walking, water sport or water-based recreation).
- initiatives designed to facilitate or improve community-based biodiversity management.

Local Objective 10

To promote and progress social, community and economic action supportive of environmental protection, sustainability and good practice in environmental care.

Theme: Rural Environment

Sub-theme: Development of Renewable Energy

Strategic Action 1

Development of Renewable Energy - To drive community engagement with and investment in energy conservation, renewable energy utilisation and new sustainable energy technologies

Description of Strategic Action

This strategic action seeks to secure investment in improving the thermal, electrical and energy efficiency of community buildings and facilities while also encouraging investment in the retrofitting of new sustainable energy technologies. The methodological approach will involve innovative collective and partnership approaches in delivering cost effective capital investment operations. Support measures will include, building fabric upgrade including insulation ventilation and heat recovery systems, systems upgrades, energy saving control technology, energy generation systems passive and active.

Further Information

Further information relating to the LEADER Programme can be accessed via the following websites:

www.meathpartnership.ie

www.environ.ie/en/community/ruraldevelopment/eururaldevelopment/

If you would like to discuss any potential LEADER project ideas with a Project Development Officer you can contact us at the below e-mail address:

leader@meathpartnership.ie

Or by phone on:

046-9280790

Alternatively you can write to Meath Partnership to request information on the LEADER programme at the below address:

**Meath Partnership
Unit 7, Kells Business Park,
Cavan Road,
Kells,
Co. Meath**